

Treasures In The Family Tree of Christ

– Christmas Season Message

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Introduction: Why are these genealogies and names given at the very beginning of Matthew's gospel? I wanted to bring something before you along the Christmas theme, and this is, I believe, the leading of the Lord that I bring before you what I've called 'Treasures in the Family Tree Of Christ'. We begin our reading at verse 1 of Matthew chapter 1. Now there's a lot of strange names in this first chapter of Matthew, so bear with me because I believe that out of the depths of all this difficulty we'll dig out some treasures this morning. **READ MATTHEW 1:1-25**

I want you also to turn with me, we're not reading from this at the moment, but Luke chapter 3 – and I want you to put your Bible bookmark or your little ribbon in your Bible in Luke chapter 3, and keep your Bible open at Matthew chapter 1 as we look at these treasures in the family tree of Christ. Our usual tendency reading God's word is to skip out the difficult passages. Especially when reading things like genealogies – which seems so tedious and profitless. However, the Bible tells us in 2 Tim 3:16 that **all Scripture, all scripture, is given by inspiration of God and is profitable**. It's profitable for many things, Paul says to Timothy that it's **profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness** – but we must conclude that no matter how difficult the passage or the reading might be, or on a little glance on the surface no matter how little spiritual truth we may think there to be in a passage, all scripture which is inspired by God is profitable.

And so I'm led this morning to cover something different from the Bible for this Christmas season...the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew. In fact, it's given as sort of a preface, like an introduction, almost like a book in itself at the beginning of this gospel. And it is indeed interesting why. Many people are obsessed with genealogies, especially their own. They like to personalise their own history and look back at their family tree, and set themselves into their family tree maybe hundreds or thousands of years back as to where they came from.

But what's the significance at the beginning of Matthew's gospel? Well, Matthew is proving that the Lord Jesus Christ was in the line of King David and that consequently, Jesus was who He said He was...the Messiah. This then also connects our Lord Jesus with all of the messianic prophecies that are given in the Old Testament Scriptures. I want you to think about Matthew 22:41, **The Lord Jesus posed this question to the Jews: While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David."** Now, therefore, when we trace the lineage of our Lord Jesus Christ back to David what is it other than proof that the Lord Jesus is and was who He said He was?

Let's dig a little deeper into the significance of this lineage. Remember that Matthew's gospel is primarily the gospel to the Jew, the gospel of the King of the Jews to the kingdom...and so you begin to understand just how important it is that starting from chapter 1, and verse 1, that the Lord Jesus' lineage is drawn from Abraham. Then in Mark's gospel there is no genealogy because Mark is more concerned with the servanthood of our Lord Jesus as he quickly uses that little word over and over again: **'immediately, immediately, immediately'** – he hasn't really the time to put a genealogy in, it doesn't serve his purpose in his gospel. But Luke's gospel which has traditionally been understood as the gospel of the man Christ Jesus, homing in on the humanity of the Lord Jesus, and you look at Luke 3:38, you see that he begins his genealogy not with Abraham, but because he's speaking of Jesus the man he starts his genealogy with Adam, the first man. And of course, Luke's gospel was written primarily to the Gentiles which is why he goes beyond Abraham right to the father of all humanity – Adam himself. And then in John's gospel there is no genealogy because John is dealing primarily with the divine Christ from all eternity – the Word that was with God and was God – John give Christ His beginning before the worlds began and His lineage, as far as John is concerned, is from all eternity past.

And so you can see the different emphasis in the four gospels. When Matthew writes this genealogy, he starts with Abraham and goes forward. However, Luke starts with Jesus and goes backwards. Why? You see the genealogy of a man always goes from the son to the father and that's what we see in Luke. But the genealogy of a King is always given from the fathers down to that king, whoever the son was...and that's what we see in Matthew. So get this into your mind first that Matthew is speaking to the Jew, and he is speaking about the King of the Jews that came down from Abraham.

1. A TREASURE OF GENEALOGY

If you keep that in your mind, right away we have a treasure of genealogy - that's the first treasure I want to bring out of this passage: the treasure of genealogy. Matthew brings us the genealogy of a King because he is proving Jesus' legal right to be Messiah... to be the heir to David's throne, and he does this through Joseph. Matthew chapter 1 traces Jesus Christ to King David through the person of Joseph, His earthly father. But when you go to Luke's genealogy in chapter 3, it traces Jesus' genealogy through Mary's lineage to David.

Now, Luke 3:23 you will see it talks about Heli (or Eli) as the father of Joseph...but he really is the father-in-law of Joseph. Eli was really Mary's father, and so the father-in-law of Joseph. So, in Luke's gospel you have Mary's lineage right back to David, and in Matthew you have Joseph's lineage right back to David. So what is that telling us? That both Mary and Joseph were in the line to the throne of David –both of them! Matthew proves that the Lord Jesus' legal right to the throne of David was through Joseph his earthly father, and Luke proves Jesus' natural right by flesh through his earthly mother. This is amazing.

Let's make head and tail of this now... Isaiah 7:14 says, '**Behold the virgin shall be with child**'. Now, not only did the Messiah have to be born of a virgin, but also had to be born of a virgin to David's line...physically related to King David. But you see there is a problem: a woman could never ever be an heir to the throne. It doesn't matter that Mary was related to David way back, a woman could never be heir to the throne. So not only should the Messiah have to be born of a virgin, and born of a virgin that was related by flesh and blood to King David, but that virgin that was in the Davidic line also had to be married to a man who was equally related to King David in the Davidic line.

Are you beginning to see how this is a true treasure of genealogy? Are you starting to see the perfection of the great plan of God? Even though Mary couldn't be qualified to be an heir to the throne, God caused Mary to marry Joseph so that Jesus could legally and royally be related to King David's family...and so be the Messiah. For man this would be an impossibility to arrange, but God brings all these impossibilities together and sets His Son in the midst of it. God has left no room for any other man to claim to be Messiah, no room. No wonder the Lord said: '**Many shall rise and call themselves Christ, but it will all be unfounded**'. No other person is able to stand up and prove that they are the Messiah and their line goes back to David.... But for Jesus, it's proved here! Oh, isn't it wonderful?

2. A TREASURE OF NUMEROLOGY

But I have three more treasures to bring to you in the time that's left. The second is a treasure of numerology. Genealogy is the study of generations, numerology is the study of numbers. If you look at verse 17 there are three fourteens mentioned. All the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen; from David until the carrying away of Babylon are fourteen; from the carrying away of Babylon to Christ are fourteen. Now I think that one of the reasons why Matthew breaks it into three fourteens is for memorisation, because these early Christians had to memorise this to debate with Jews about the lineage of our Lord Jesus. I think that that's one of the reasons why he does this.

What is interesting is that three times fourteen is the number 42. I think however you need to be careful when studying numbers in the scripture because some people honestly go overboard, but I want to point something out here: 42 in the scriptures represents the experience of suffering. The number 40 is well known to represent trial... Noah in the ark whilst it rained 40 days and 40 nights, the Israelites 40 years in the wilderness, Jesus 40 days then His temptation came. 40 doesn't always carry deep suffering with it, however 42 speaks specifically of great sufferings. In Revelation it talks about 42 months (3.5 years) which is the second half of the tribulation period – Jacob's trouble. No other period of suffering has ever been seen on the earth - and the idea is not just that it's a period of suffering, but that the 43rd period – after 42, after the suffering - the 43rd period is the period of rest.

I think there is significance in this... in this genealogy you have 42 generations from Abraham right down to Christ, but the 43rd is rest! Isn't it wonderful? Rest in Christ! And when we come to Christ, we indeed find rest. Hebrews 4:3, **'For we who have believed do enter that rest'**, and Matthew 11:28, **'Come to Me... and I will give you rest'**.

Don't forget that the number seven is also significant in Scripture.... And two times seven is fourteen, and we have three fourteens here. Seven is the perfect number in Judaism signifying perfection, completeness. A lot of Israel's history is broken in sevens: 70 years of captivity in Babylon, 70 prophetic weeks in Daniel, the last week of that 70 prophetic weeks is broken into seven years. And here you have in these fourteens, two times seven three times over. And if seven is perfection, two times seven three times over - what must that mean? Absolute and complete fulfilment and rest in Christ! Isn't it amazing that it's not just the names, but also the numbers that point to the fulfilment of Christ and the rest we find in Him?

3. A TREASURE OF TYPOLOGY

Let me give you another treasure, a treasure of typology. Genealogy is the study of generations, numerology the study of numbers, typology is the study of types - and a type in the Bible is just a figure, a symbol of something that is future, pointing towards something that is distant. If you look at verse 1 it says: **'The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ'**. If you turn with me to Genesis chapter 5 and verse 1, you read here: **'This is the book of the genealogy of Adam' (NKJV)**. Now if you read down this generation of Adam it has the word **'begat'**, or **'became the father of'** but it often has **'and then he died...and he died...and he died'**. This is a generation of death that came upon all men through sin, through Adam our forefather; but as you turn to Matthew this is a new generation, the generation of Jesus Christ. That word 'generation' or 'genealogy', which is the literal word **'genesis'**, is only found twice in the whole Bible - once in the Old Testament, Genesis 5:1; and once in the New Testament, Matthew 1:1. What Adam had wrought on humanity by his original sin, now the last Adam is coming in through the Nativity of Christ, born in Bethlehem, to undo and reverse everything in contrast to the first Adam. What typology there is in this!

But look further at this in Matthew 1:1, **'The generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, and the son of Abraham'**. Now you think of David and think of Abraham for a moment, and you will remember from your knowledge of the Old Testament that both of them were promised by God to have sons - isn't that right? For Abraham – Isaac was promised, who was a promise of a racial line of Jewish people that would number greater than the sand of the shore and the stars of the sky....and that this nation would spring up to be a blessing to all nations. But if you think about the typology of Isaac for a moment, the Scriptures say that Sarah and Abraham were way past age to have children but God made the impossible possible and gave His power for Sarah to conceive. Remember that Abraham took Isaac in Genesis 22 and offered him upon the altar to God as a sacrifice. But we read that he had faith in Hebrews 11, that if Isaac was slain then God could raise that child up from the dead again. So there's not only death and offering and sacrifice, but there's resurrection. Can you see the typology in all of this? And Isaac married Rebekah, a gentile at the time, and so we begin seeing the merging of human and the divine.

What about David's son? His name was Solomon with means 'peaceful'. Solomon's greatest gift was wisdom and his specific life's work was building the Jewish temple. His reign was characteristic of peace and prosperity on the nation. Do you see the typology...the significance? But I want to stop you here and warn you for a moment...because the promise of their sons didn't fully come to fruition. You see, in the Old Testament, Isaac had a weak character and the appalling failure of his sons are seen right throughout the whole ages of Judaism – he failed to really grasp the promises the God had given to his father Abraham. And Solomon...in spite of all his wisdom and gifts from God, his life was an unutterable and appalling failure! The temple he built to glorify God because a centre for a form of godliness but lacked the power of God because of his sin, and it was his sin which ultimately caused the fall of the Davidic dynasty!

So what do we see in all this? This genealogy shows the treasure of typology that points towards another who would one day perfectly fulfil all the promises that were given to Abraham's sons and David's sons...AND WHO IS HE??? Let me remind you of His words: **'Before Abraham was I am', 'Someone greater than Solomon is here'**. Jesus Christ realised and fulfilled all the purposes that were failed in Isaac, Solomon, and all after Him. In His sacrifice, in His glorious resurrection, marrying a Gentile bride, building a spiritual temple and sending forth His Holy Spirit into it to give it the power that was necessary. I want you to see that is all looks to Christ who is the full fulfilment of all of God's purposes and promises. Abraham, the father of faith, faded out of sight but he saw his faith vindicated in Jesus Christ. The government of David, which failed, waits for Christ's administration on the earth. The captivity which was in the time of Babylon, and the people of God signed and sobbed in agony, waits for freedom to come...and it has come now and is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. And you have the judges, the kings, the priests, theocracy, monarch, hierarchy...and Matthew is simply saying is that all these things have been pointing toward the Lord Jesus, and now they are all fulfilled in Him - and then he starts his gospel to tell you all about it!

4. A TREASURE OF SOTERIOLOGY

Here's the last treasure - a treasure of genealogy, a treasure of numerology, a treasure of typology - and here's the last, but not least, and I want to give you it: the treasure of soteriology, which is the study of salvation. If you realise that in the ancient near east, in Palestine in Jesus' day, a woman was not a person, she was a thing. She was seen as a possession of her father or her husband, and they could do with her as they pleased. Certainly a woman was never ever to be included within Jewish pedigree, and you would never find a woman in the genealogies of a Jew. In fact, one of the morning prayers of a Jewish man was: 'Lord, I thank You that You haven't made me a Gentile, You haven't made me a slave, and You haven't made me a woman'. Well, if there was to be a woman in the genealogy of Christ, you would have thought perhaps that it would have been a noble and devoted woman that you would find in the Old Testament - maybe Sarah or Rebekah, or Deborah, or as Hebrews 11 says: **'women that received their dead raised to life again, and others who were tortured not accepting deliverance'**. In the genealogy of the one who would be the seed of the woman that would bruise the serpent's head and would be Messiah, you would think you would find some great woman of esteem - but can I tell you today, look carefully: there are four women, and three of them at least are not marked by holiness, but they are marked by shame - and the fourth belongs to a race that was cursed by the law of God.

(a) TAMAR: In the closing moments let me give you those four women. Look at verse 3: **'Judah begat Phares and Zara of Tamar'** - there's the woman, Tamar. In Genesis 38, she was the daughter-in-law of Judah and she was married to a man who died. It actually says that he displeased the Lord, so God killed him. The custom then was that if your husband died, then your brother-in-law had to marry you to raise up children in lieu of your husband. However Obed did fulfil his duty, and so it says the Lord struck him down.

Then Judah promised to give her the younger brother as a husband when he grew up, but then Judah didn't carry out the promise. So Tamar took matters into her own hands, and one day when Judah was travelling, Tamar disguised herself as a prostitute, slept with Judah, and bore a child to her own father-in-law. So there you have it – incest, adultery, fornication, seduction, you name it, it's in the book.... and she is in the genealogy of our Lord Jesus. You say: 'What could possibly qualify her to be in the genealogy of the Lord?' - do you want to hear it? The only thing that qualifies her to be there is her shame, her shame.

(b) RAHAB: Let me give you the second one, verse 5: 'Rahab' - Joshua chapter 2. You read about the spies who went to spy in Jericho when they went into the home of this harlot at Rahab, and they were given a place to stay and she hid them from the people in Jericho and from the king. Because of that they showed her grace, and they said that they wouldn't slay her house and her family if she put a red ribbon or red rope in the window of her home - but the Bible tells us that it was by faith that the harlot Rahab was not killed like the other unbelievers when Jericho was taken. She was a harlot, full of abominations, so why is she in the genealogy of Christ? Here's why: faith! That's all, faith.

(c) RUTH: Look at the third one, verse 5b: 'Ruth' - now there's no stain of character on Ruth, but her problem is she is a Moabitess, and the law of Moses was against the Moabites and cursed them. In fact Deuteronomy 23 verse 3 says: '**An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever**'. But faith brought Ruth into the Lord's people along with her children, and the third generation after her - her great grandson - is King David himself! What the law had cursed, grace set aside and brought her in. Oh, this is tremendous!

(d) BATHSHEBA: The fourth in verse 6, it just says 'her of Uriah' - and of course you know the wife of Uriah the Hittite was Bathsheba, that David committed adultery with. I think David here is in view more than Bathsheba, and more specifically the sin of a believing man. Even though he was a believer, even he can fall into the depths of sin and shame...and yet he's here! His backsliding that he committed, it didn't disqualify him from grace! I'll tell you, if Matthew has anything to tell us from his genealogy it's this: the treasures of salvation. God deliberately picked out the dregs of humanity to show that it is faith that lays hold of salvation, deliverance from the law is through faith, and even in the case of a believer that falls, the assurance of salvation is through faith. Grace shines through it all, nothing but grace we can see in this genealogy - four women who are sinners, four women who are Gentiles - and we could almost sing with Hannah today (1 Sam. 2:8): **He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory**. Matthew's purpose in this genealogy is not to cover-up the outrageous sin of some of the ancestors of Jesus, but to emphasise them; that on the human side of Jesus' ancestry was part of the world.

CONCLUSION: As I close, let me ask you at this Christmas time, does this teaching bring any revelation or deepen your understanding of verses concerning the incarnation of Christ? The Bible says, '**He came in the likeness of sinful flesh**', and also, '**He came unto His own**'. It teaches us that the God of heaven took on humanity...in is in His lineage...and not only was he a friend of publicans and sinners, but He was related to them! Although He was sinless, yet His lineage is associated with sinners...which is a marvellous illustration and symbol of the gospel which is able to break down the division between Jew and Gentile, male and female, clean and unclean, God and man... for Jesus hasn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Is it really any wonder in verse 21 that God gives Him the name JESUS which means Jehovah is salvation?

Now listen: if you can't come and adore Him after that, I don't know what's wrong with you.